



KAAVI ART: A UNIQUE TRADITION OF COASTAL KARNATAKA (IN TRADITIONAL HERITAGE AND SCIENTIFIC CONTEXT)

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ABSTRACT

Kaavi art has a very ancient tradition. Said that beginning with Konkani devotees of Goa, this art entered Karnataka by the 13th-14th century. But it is possible that this art appeared in the coastal part of Karnataka in the 12th century itself. Due to the political situation in Goa, the Konkani people from there came and settled in the northern coast of Karnataka. Although these people mingled with the local people, they built temples of the gods and goddesses they worshiped and got busy creating kaavi images in them. Even today, we can see images in the homes and temples of Konkani devotees of coastal Karnataka. Later, others started learning this art, which led to the development of Kaavi art.

KEYWORDS: Regional Context, Konkani Devotees, Coastal Karnataka, Climatic Anomaly, Deteriorate, Emotions in the Figures, Modern Context, Mythological Background, Beliefs

INTRODUCTION

The method of drawing with red clay or refined natural paint, usually containing Kaavi, is known as 'Kaavi art'. Especially Kaavi art is created on building walls, pillars etc. So this type of work can also be called '*Kaavi Murals*'.

This art is found only in the coastal part of Karnataka and is not found in the plain area. Although there are many reasons for this, the climate of coastal Karnataka and the nature of the building is said to be a major reason. Most of the year in the coastal region is wet and dry climate. Due to this climatic anomaly, the color pictures created on the walls here deteriorate quickly. So, if the pictures are painted on the coastal side like the multi-colored wall paintings created in the plains, they will not last long. So, we can understand that multi colored paintings were painted here, matching the atmosphere of the coastal region.

Nature and design of Kaavi art: As mentioned earlier, Kaavi art is created on a wall or pillars of a building or interior, so this type of art is known as 'wall painting'. In this art, the combination of light and shadow seen in multi-colored wall painting, the idea of relief and depression is not seen and the images appear flat. Yet the artist has clearly shown the emotions in the figures. It can be said that every detail in the art is shown by the lines itself which is characteristic of Kaavi art.

Kaavi art method and stage: Before creating the Kaavi art, a draft of the picture to be painted on the wall is drawn on the sheet. A plaster wall is applied over this. By doing this, the mural creation process will be started. The wall to be plastered for painting is made of lime, jaggery, glue, fine sand, etc. mixed well, mixed with kaphi dye and soaked for a few days. When this coating material hardens it is applied to the wall. While this coated wall is raw, the image written on the sheet is pasted on the wall. Then a sharp nail like steel should be scratched

loudly on the line of the image drawn on the sheet. Thus by scratching or pulling not only the sheet but also the raw wall compound is torn along the line where the previous white wall is visible. While this is a method of art with white color on a red background, more recently it has also been painted with direct kaavi color. We can still see a lot of pictures painted in both these ways in this area. In general, in Kaavi art, along with the ancient style of mural painting, we also get to see images of modern context in many parts of this area.

The content of the images: Most of the works created in Kaavi art are of mythological background. Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavata etc. are commonly found everywhere. Images of Dashavatara, Krishna Leela, various forms of the Goddess along with folk beliefs are also depicted in these mythological background images.

Bases of Kaavi images: Kaavi art is especially prevalent in the coastal areas of Karnataka. The temples, houses and monasteries here are the main bases of Kaavi images.

The Madhukeshwara temple at Banavasi has many Kaavi art, among which the images of Jaya-Vijaya and decorative motifs are prominent. These images are said to be very ancient. Similarly, there are Kaavi art in Sri Ram Mandir in Honnavar. The pictures here are from composed in the 18th century, they are among the best of coastal Kaavi art. The outer wall, inner wall, shikhara on the sanctum, roof and pillars of this temple are filled with Kaavi images. The prominent images here are Dashavataras, Anjaneya, Garuda, Jaya-Vijaya, Ganesha, various forms of Devi, Seshashayana Vishnu, Gajendra Moksha, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Bhasmasura, Mohini, Kalinga Mardhana, Nandi, Bhiringi, Matsya maidens, bird-shaped maidens, seated on an elephant. Images of deity men seated on Nandi are depicted along with images of deity men, etc.

The images in the Gopinatha Venkataramana temple at Haladipura are associated with Dashavata. Among these, the image of Narasimhavata is the most beautiful, and today most of the images in this temple are on the verge of destruction. The arts in the Sita Ramachandra temple at Belagi Balagoda in Siddhapur taluk of North Canara district depict images of Dashavata, maidservants, four images of Anjaneya of large size, images of sages, monkeys etc. The outer walls of the temple, the shikhara above the sanctum sanctorum have the above mentioned images. Another temple in Belagi, Bedkani Sita Ramachandra Temple is very ancient and the outer walls of this temple are filled with Kaavi art. Not only images of Dashavata, images of Narada, Tumbura, Garuda also attendants are depicted here.

Dasavata images, circular maps, flower-cord designs are painted in the Venkataramana temple at Kumta. Similarly, the inner and outer walls of the Mahalasa Narayane temple are filled with many kaavi art. The main images here include Suryamandala, Chandramadala, Dashavata, Shiva, Brahma, Kalingamardhana Krishna, Vishnu on Adishesha, Krishna Radhe. The outer and inner walls of Lakshmi Venkateswara temple in Gerusoppa are filled with many kaavi art. The pictures are mainly in the form of Karnarjuna, royal queen, the biggest lotus flowers, Narasimhavata, the battle of Arjuna Sudhanva, Bali Chakravarti, Vishnu sitting on the Garuda vehicle, Anjaneya carrying Rama, Images of Krishna, Saraswati etc are depicted in this temple.

Marikamba temple in Sirsi has many Kaavi images, in recent times all those images have been updated. There are art on the outer wall, inner wall and surrounding mandapams of this temple. Images of various forms of goddess, like Hanuman, Garuda, Raja Maharaja, Designes, Ramayana, Karnarjuna Yuddha, Shiva, Ugranarasimha, Lord Krishna, Shanmukha and Ganapati, Dashavata images, images of deity men along with various types of birds and animals are created in this temple.

A lot of Kaavi works have been created on the outer and inner walls of Devi Mandir in Olale village of Ankola taluk. The various forms of the goddess and the circular a designs are beautifully rendered. In the temple of Biligiramma at Shatageri there are pictures of kaavi on the inner and outer walls. While on the inner wall there are many scenes depicting about the Goddess and images of flower vines, on the outer wall there are various types of circular designs as well as images of Dwarapalakas. Many works are carved on the inner and outer walls of the Maruti temple at Honnavara. While the outer wall has images of Dashavata, the inner wall has images of Jaya-Vijaya and Anjaneya in various poses.

Apart from all the above mentioned places, Kaavi art have been created in temples like Venkataramana Temple of Honnavara, Narayana temple of Agradhara, Lakshmi Narayana temple of Aversa, Shambhulingeshwara temple of Gunavanthi, Ammanavara temple of Mavinkurve, Bhubaneswari temple of Bhuvanagiri, Aryadurga temple of Ankola, Ganapati temple of Honnavara, Agase Vinayaka temple of Aghanani.

Kaavi art are found not only in temples but also in mathas, houses and other architectural structures. It is no exaggeration that in this background, Kaavi art has grown as a part of the culture of the coastal people, an expression of beauty.

The art of Kaavi in present days: I also remember the occasion of 2001-02. I was teaching in Kannada University, Hampi. The day before Shivratri, all of us teachers went on a Goa tour. While coming we visited the coastal temples. At this time I became particularly interested in the art of Kaavi drawn on the outer and inner walls of the temples there. In those days I write articles for the newspaper. I also wrote an article about the art of Kaavi. After that, whenever I went to the coastal area, I came to know more about the art of Kaavi. Badami's senior friend Anand Pujar prepared his D.Lit. theses on the art of Kaavi.

The above information is based on the visit to all those bases during 2004-05. By that time, the original art of Kaavi was seen in most places. But in the month of November 2019, I again took fieldwork to the coastal part of Karnataka. During this time many places were visited. What I saw then was a big surprise. In many temples, chemical coloring was done on the original Kaavi art. Especially the paintings in the *Sirsi Marikamba temple*, known as the hive of Kaavi art, were full of brilliance. Hearing that chemical coloring is done on the original Kaavi art during the fair once in two or three years, my mind was blown away.

In Kaavi art, two pictorial techniques are observed, Black Kaavi and Red Kaavi. It is said that Black Kaavi art is commonly used by Christian religious in Goa. Red Kaavi art was drawn by Hindus. But in recent times, the original colors have faded and the use of chemical dyes has increased. Distemper, Enamel paint, Acrylic paint is usually left out. Traces of the original kaavi paint are still visible in most areas. Interviews and conversations have also been conducted with many people to know all these types of speech. Dr. Unnikrishnan, art scholar, Veena Srinivasa, drawn Kaavi art herself, Ravi Ganga, an amateur painter from Gokarna, Rajesh Dutta Sirasikar, Sanjeeva Sham Bhat, the curator of the Ram Mandir, Bhaskara Bhat, the priest of Sri Navadurga Sansthan, S.A. Krishnaiah, Director of Historical Studies, Mahaganapathi mahamaya temple manager Vishnushridhara Prabhu; Thus, I met many people and many places like Gopi Mane, Kalasada Mane in Gokarna and got a lot of information about the art of Kaavi.

There is a continuous process of polishing the Kaavi art on the occasion of fairs and festivals. It has become a job for most artists. In some places, the original Kaavi art have been preserved and in other places, they have painted with lime. The reason why art lovers love this art so much is to write something like Kaavi, Warli, Hase, Chittar; All these arts are interpenetrating each other. Kaavi, a traditional art, is currently being used in the contemporary context in innovative techniques. Dr. Janardhan Rao Havanje has done a lot of work in this field. Along with the traditional, has been experimenting with contemporary aspiration in this art. In the present article I have tried to give information about all these periods.

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- Fieldwork carried out in parts of Coastal Karnataka in 2004-05 & 2019, and information about experts and artists who know about Kaavi art have helped me in preparing the article. I am grateful to all of them.

KAAVI ART



The art of Kaavi painted by Dr. Janardhan Rao Havanje in contemporary aspirations

Different Images of KAAVI ART



Surya Mandala and Chandra Mandala thematic ancient Kaari art



Gayatri and Natya Ganesha - Kaavi art, painted by Dr. Janardhan Rao Havanje

Different Images of Kaavi art - God Goddesses



Anjaneya



Varaha



Dhruva and Suruchi



Sarasvathi



Indra and Kamadhenu

All these Kaavi arts that I captured during my field work in 2004-05
& some from Krishnanand Kamat's collection